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Food and Nutrition

April 1975 • Volume 5 • Number 2

ATX341
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Historically, the food sections of major daily newspapers have been filled with recipes, large color pictures of exotic dishes, party planning ideas, where-to-dine columns and, of course, full pages of supermarket ads.

And, it was axiomatic that the readership of these sections was predominantly female middle class.

"What we had was largely a housewives' cooking class in print," said Bill Collins, food editor for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

But not long ago, priorities changed. Present economic conditions, growing unemployment and rising food prices led editors to reassess the food pages in an attempt to meet the needs of their readers.

"I feel our role, now, is to try to help people understand what's happening to them and their food budgets," Mr. Collins said, "and to help them stay within their budgets."

Editors have begun printing features on dollar-saving recipes, inexpensive restaurants and surveys of plentiful foods. Information on the food stamp program has also become a part of the food section's overall service to the public.

"We've found more and more daily newspaper readers are all of a sudden qualified for stamps," Mr. Collins explained.

In addition, he said, the food section is getting more and more inquiries from welfare rights groups and community organizations in low-income neighborhoods.

"We're still doing gourmet things and recipe reviews because life isn't all vinegar," Mr. Collins said. "But I think we are reaching more for lower and lower-middle income people."

Advertisers in food sections have also realized the need to reach food stamp recipients. Many supermarket chains provide food stamp information as part of their regular food ads.

In an effort to help food journalists, the Food and Nutrition Service's Northeast Region provided a series of shopping and food preparation tips for food stamp families to some 60 newspapers and wire services. The response to the suggestions was favorable and immediate.

"There is a definite need for information on the food stamp program," said Meredith Homer, women's editor for the Richmond Times Dispatch. "Our reporters are out interviewing people who are involved in the program from both ends, issuer and recipient."

Jean Lesem, UPI news service food editor, said she felt consumer information should be a part of the food stamp program.

"All of us need to shop more, prudently—wisely," she said. "Shopping suggestions offer a great opportunity for food stamp families to get better value for their food dollar. There are too many food stamp participants who do not shop wisely."

The shopping tips suggested participants check newspaper ads for sales; prepare shopping lists in advance to eliminate impulse buying; compare brands; buy foods in season to get high quality at low prices; and redeem "cents off" coupons. The list of suggestions pointed out that small packages usually cost more than larger packages, and quite often, an understanding of unit pricing can save money.

The tips on food preparation urged

participants to prepare only enough food for one meal, or, when leftovers can't be avoided, to use them in other meals. A number of meat extending suggestions, like using rice or spaghetti with main courses, appeared in the list.

The shopping tips included a warning against overcooking—suggesting the cook use a small amount of water with vegetables and save the left-over liquid for soups, sauces or stews.

Ella Elvin, food editor for the New York Daily News, added another dimension to the shopping suggestions.

"The ideas are excellent," she said. "And I think people will get more out of them if they are tied in with a best buy or seasonal marketing guide such as when to buy and availability."

The first day she received the suggestions, Martha Lane, food and consumer reporter for the Buffalo, New York, Courier Express, wrote a column on the ideas. She also said she would continue to use them in future stories.

"The information will be very helpful with my columns," Ms. Lane said. "Of course, it would have been better if brands and prices were identified. But I appreciate USDA's position and especially what the food stamp program is trying to do for people."

Many editors expressed confidence that the suggestions would get wide readership. Food has become a major topic of discussion, they explained, and the general public has become increasingly aware of the contents of the food pages.

Mr. Collins said a survey conducted by the Inquirer showed the food section is read as well as, or better than, the sports section. And, the pages

have gained a whole new audience.

"I would say that between 40 and 50 percent of the letters and phone calls we receive are from men," he said.

Winnie Cook, consumer watch reporter for the New Brunswick, New Jersey, Home News, said she feels the FNS shopping suggestions are greatly needed by the newest wave of food stamp eligibles.

"With more and more people on the unemployment lists these days,

the government needs to continue the educational program with respect to disseminating this type of consumer information," she said.

"People who thought they would never need food stamps, or be protected by shopping tips, are finding that they are now the unemployed and economically deprived."

Writing about food stamps has given some editors better insight into the food stamp program.

"From what I can see, the program

has been a good one for people who are participating," said Kathy Hacker, food editor for the Philadelphia Bulletin. "I do know, however, many people I believe are eligible who have not applied for stamps because of pride."

Ms. Hacker's attitude is shared by many other editors who hope their columns will encourage these people to take advantage of the help available to them through the food stamp program. ☆



North Carolina's Food Stamp Hot Line . . . Information for the Needy

By Thomas A. Gregory

There's a small room in the North Carolina food stamp office in Raleigh that for 3 months had one of the busiest telephone lines in the State.

It was the North Carolina statewide toll-free food line and its number—800-662-7935—was a familiar one to North Carolinians.

From 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. each day four people answered from 150 to 250 inquiries about the food stamp program. The calls came from all over, from the big cities as well as mountain hamlets.

The service began on November 1, 1974, when David T. Flaherty, Secretary of the Department of Human Resources, saw the need to inform people of the food stamp program in a more personal way rather than through the usual broadscale announcements.

"We realized," he said, "that there were simply too many people in North Carolina who did not fully understand the new food assistance program."

Rosemary Mims, director of the

food stamp outreach program, was placed in charge of the service, and she began by pulling out all stops in advance publicity. She used every medium available. Just about every newspaper and magazine in the State carried stories of the new service, as did radio and television stations.

In addition, Ms. Mims pointed out, effective publicity came from a cooperative effort by supermarket operators. They provided generous space in their weekly ads to display the new toll-free food line number.

"The success of the telephone service exceeded our fondest expectations by far," Ms. Mims proudly said. "Many people who were too shy or embarrassed to go to the food stamp office took advantage of our service and inquired by telephone."

Most of the questions concerned eligibility, and the director thinks her staff saved much time for both the applicants and the county certification workers. Often, an inquirer, after revealing the household's income, family status and resources, could be told definitely that he or she would not be eligible for the program. In other instances, the callers would be advised to contact the nearest social service department.

"And right here," Ms. Mims explained, "the telephone staff saved many hours of frustration and time. The staff would instruct the inquirers to get pencil and paper, and then they would proceed to enumerate the items to be taken to the certification office."

When callers did not know the location of the local department of social services, the telephone staff had all the necessary information ready to give them.

John Kerr, in charge of the food stamp program in North Carolina, feels that the tremendous success of the toll-free telephone service was due to Ms. Mims' thorough training program for the telephone staff. Not only did she instruct them in all aspects of the food stamp program, but she stressed the importance of the human relations factor.

"We realized," she said, "that the reason many eligible people in the State had not applied was that they were too proud, too embarrassed or

simply too timid to walk in and talk to total strangers about their personal affairs."

The staff members gained the confidence of the inquirers by showing empathy for them and their situations. Curt answers and hurried replies had no place in Ms. Mims' information campaign.

Of the thousands of conversations that she recalls, she remembers best the unfortunate woman who, haltingly, and obviously deeply humiliated, confessed that her children left that morning for school having eaten nothing for breakfast and no supper the night before.

"We just don't have a thing in the house," the woman sobbed, "and I was wondering if you might help . . ."

And help they did, in a hurry. The staff contacted the woman's county department of social services, and a caseworker was at the home in a matter of hours. That night the family had supper—provided by food stamps!

Mr. Flaherty conceived the idea of the toll-free telephone lines when the need for food stamp education was at its peak. A number of counties had switched from food distribution to stamps in July, and county certification offices were swamped with applicants.

Coupled with this, the economy in the highly industrialized State was beginning to slow down. North Carolina's textile mills and furniture factories were laying off employees.

"A new group of unfortunate people was in our midst," explained Ms. Mims. "There were thousands of proud people who had been accustomed to being employed who now found themselves in need of help. We knew there were literally thousands of people out over the State who needed stamps, but they were totally at a loss as to what to do."

By the end of January, Ms. Mims said the program began to stabilize and the number of calls began to dwindle. The free statewide telephone service had served its purpose and it was terminated.

"There is no way, however, to estimate what it meant to the needy people of North Carolina during a most critical time," said Mr. Kerr. ☆

Four Sisters Specialize in School Lunch

By Ronald J. Rhodes

In certain parts of Colorado, the name Sekich is synonymous with school lunch. Why? Because of the diverse roles the four Sekich sisters have played in the National School Lunch Program.

In Longmont, Colorado, Mary Sekich Graham and Martha S. Sekich have been involved in producing well balanced meals for Longmont youngsters for a number of years.

A third sister, Josephine Sekich Bruce, was instrumental in starting a lunch program in a public school in Greeley, Colorado, about 35 miles from Longmont. She now serves as a guest professor in primary education at the University of Northern Colorado.

But the family's relationship to the school lunch program doesn't stop in Colorado. Still another sister, Dorothy Sekich Meyers is a member of the staff of the National School Lunch Program in USDA's Food and Nutrition Service in Washington, D.C.

Why all the interest in food?

"I suppose it started with our mother, who was concerned daily with serving plenty of food to her large family," says Mary. "We often had company for lunch when we were growing up during the Depression—and with seven children in the family, naturally we were accustomed to feeding quite a few people."

"Really though, we just sort of 'happened' into the school lunch area," says Martha, whose husband's name also was Sekich. "Almost 20 years ago—just after my last child was born—I was looking around for something to do that would require only 3 or 4 hours a day. The school lunch program had an opening and I started work."

Martha's present schedule is far from relaxing. She's on the go at 6:30 every morning and sometimes doesn't stop until long after dark.

Mary moved into the school lunch area in much the same way. With children through college, she decided she would like to work fewer hours

a day than her job as a checker at a grocery store allowed. She applied for part time work with school food service, and she is now assistant to the food service director—putting in almost as many hours as Martha.

But it was Josephine who actually had the first hand in the school lunch program. During the early forties, she served as assistant principal, supervisor of student teachers, and supervisor of the school lunch program in the Wray, Colorado, schools.

"The situation was considerably different then," she says. "We actually went to the farms and selected animals on the hoof to be butchered for the lunch program."

But then, as now, she saw a big difference between the children who were getting well balanced meals every day, and those less fortunate.

"I soon learned to check on children who could not learn, to see if they were getting enough to eat," Josephine explains. "Often, in fact, they were not."

Dorothy Meyers is a section head in the program review and analysis staff of the FNS Child Nutrition Division. "We analyze and evaluate information on all the child nutrition programs," she says. "Because my job includes making recommendations and developing plans to increase program effectiveness, I am very interested in the work my sisters are doing in Colorado."

"Dorothy likes to get in touch with 'grass roots' activities in the school lunch program when she comes out for a visit," Mary points out. "She quizzes us about what is happening and how certain national changes are going over locally."

Martha has become well-known in Longmont schools. Now manager in the Longmont high school cafeteria, she is often called upon to help in training new managers in the system. And her food is famous throughout the area.

"With Martha all you have to do is

suggest something and she is ready to give it a try," says Inez Clemen, St. Vrain district school food service director.

Martha's love for children is reflected in the food she serves and in the admiration of her students. Many of them "adopt" her as their second mother.

Part of Martha's popularity is due to her willingness to find time for youngsters and faculty alike. Often, when a party is planned, she is consulted. And the manager is frequently remembered with flowers and other little gifts.

Martha not only manages the cafeteria for more than 500 high school students, but also prepares food for around 100 elderly people who receive their meals through a local senior citizens nutrition program.

These older people are perhaps the most openly appreciative of the good food prepared for them by the school cafeteria.

"We sure would like to meet the lady that provides this delicious food," a group of elderly men told Virginia Ishmael, coordinator of the senior citizens program.

"Oh, no, you don't," Ms. Ishmael quipped. "One of you might marry her and I would lose a good cook."

Mary, too, has quickly established herself as an outstanding employee in the 6 years she has been with the program. In addition to assistant food service director, she is also multiple unit manager and especially enjoys the challenge of working in a variety of schools.

"Every cafeteria is different," she says. "I am always looking for good ideas in one place that can be effectively used in another."

Food service director Clemen considers both sisters "terrific employees.

"I just can't imagine operating without them," he says.

Like their two other sisters, they have made special contributions to the school lunch program. ☆

Lunch at Castro Valley: the emphasis is on choice

By Ralph E. Vincent

What's a food service director to do, to attract kids to eat at the cafeteria? Declare a "closed" campus? Lower prices? Give trading stamps? Or none of the above?

Mary Jackson, director of food services for California's Castro Valley School District, has found there is no single answer to this question. And just providing food service is a real challenge in a district as large and diverse as Castro Valley—there are two high schools, two junior high schools, one continuation high school for students who have been suspended from regular classes, one high school for the mentally retarded, and 10 elementary schools.

But Ms. Jackson feels that getting food to students is only half the battle—she believes it's also important to understand their needs. To get a customer's eye view of the food service, this year she invited the students to express their preference in meal service on a continuing basis.

"I felt I had a need to know what their concerns were and also to test products," comments Ms. Jackson. The people in the kitchen and I could test the products but we're not the customers, and what we like maybe isn't what they like."

A corps of culinary conscious students at Castro Valley High School cooperated with Ms. Jackson to form a student food advisory council. Council members now discuss food

preferences at meetings which are held regularly in the faculty dining room. The group also serves as a taste testing panel and rates items like puddings, fruit drinks, hamburger patties and pizzas. The food sample variables being tested are unidentified until after the panel finishes its product ratings. At one meeting, for example, council members compared pre-cooked, all-meat, and patties with textured vegetable protein added, and found they preferred the patty with textured vegetable protein.

This type of information is also helpful to the food suppliers who work with the schools. "A sales representative was just in to see me," Ms. Jackson explains. "He was unhappy about the rating of his company's fruit juice. But it gave him some feedback, too, which perhaps can improve the product."

The composition of the food council changes as new students drop in on the morning meetings, but attendance averages around 10 members. The food service director feels the panel represents a fair cross section of the students and provides a forum for open discussion.

In the initial meetings of the food council, the students were concerned about the price increases on some foods. Ms. Jackson was able to point out that the school absorbed food price increases for 2 or 3 months but then had to pass them on to the

students later in the school year.

"The council is a two-way thing," she says. "The students can voice their gripes and offer suggestions for improving the service, and I can explain some of my problems in giving them what they want."

Ms. Jackson has found the students' suggestions helpful, and has included many of them in the menus and food service operation at Castro Valley and the other district high school.

The curriculum and philosophy of both high schools are progressive and innovative, and freedom of choice is the central theme. The food service is in open competition with other eating places in the community since lunch time is divided into two 50-minute periods with open campus.

This freedom of choice is reflected in the variety of food service available at the high schools. Diners may choose a regular Type A meal or a Type A "walk-away lunch" on a disposable tray, which is particularly popular during fair weather for outdoor eating. Food is also available from the deli-bar snack bar or ala carte counter which offers a choice of ready-from-the-grill hamburgers or hotdogs and all the trimmings.

The deli-bar started on a once a week basis, but the positive response may promote the service to a more frequent schedule. The deli-bar offers made-to-order sandwiches: combinations of turkey, ham, luncheon meats,

cheese, and other tasty sandwich makings are available on a choice of rolls or bread, baked in the school bakery.

Ms. Jackson and her staff keep a watchful eye on all aspects of the lunch program. "We like to see the returns," the food service director says, referring to the food remaining when the trays are returned. "If the kids aren't eating it, forget it. All I do, all the cafeteria manager does, and all the whole service does is for nothing if it goes in the garbage can."

This policy of "checking returns" was responsible for changing the lunch program at the high school for the mentally retarded. Ms. Jackson found students threw away more food when lunches were prepackaged, than when food was sent to the school in bulk.

The junior high schools also receive food in bulk for both the breakfast and lunch programs. And, with the exceptions of the deli-bar and snack bar, the junior high students have the same freedom of choice the high school students enjoy.

"The seventh graders make some poor food choices at first," Ms. Jackson says, "but by the time they advance to the next grade they become more discriminating and choose a better meal."

To help the children make wise choices, Ms. Jackson has trained cafeteria managers to provide basic

"I don't think we're hired to say, 'no, we can't do it.' We'll find a way."

instruction on nutrition and the school lunch program. The managers meet individually with different classes, who then plan the menu for their school for a day. These lunches are planned to meet Type A requirements as well as student preferences.

"We feel that if they get a chance to do this every year, and the teacher reinforces their knowledge, when the students get to junior high school, they will have learned how to make intelligent choices," says Ms. Jackson. "Again, the emphasis is on choice in our school district. So it's up to us to give them good nutritional choices."

Declining school enrollment in Castro Valley schools is the biggest challenge at the moment. "We are using different methods to serve our customers," points out Ms. Jackson. "The small schools are more expensive to operate than larger ones, but they are part of our school system."

Some small schools are operating a "solo kitchen," but none have been closed as yet. In the solo kitchen only one food service worker handles the entire meal, with some part time student assistance at lunch time. Trucks deliver the food prepackaged or in bulk to the kitchens.

"I don't think we're hired to say, 'no, we can't do it,'" says the food service director. "We'll find a way."

"Whatever the method we have to use, if that's the only way to get the job done, we'll do it." ☆

CASHIER TRAINING TAKES TO THE ROAD

By Melanie Watts



Food stamp OIC Lonnie Johnson tells trainees how the food stamp program works.



A former trainee works in a local store.

Cashier-checker training programs in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, are constantly moving students from the classroom into the workforce, supplying supermarkets and other retail stores with qualified graduates.

But the Oklahoma Adult Center for Vocational and Technical Education moves its students in more ways than one—ACVTE offers a cashier-checker course that's located in a mobile van.

The van, equipped with a classroom and miniature grocery store, travels around the city from one grocery store parking lot to another every 3 months.

At each new location the course is publicized in grocery stores, newspapers and on radio and television.

The 2½ week course was designed primarily to prepare people for grocery work and includes such topics as cash register operation, salesmanship, accuracy, behavior and the food stamp program. The last subject is an important one for grocery checkers because food stamp customers spend nearly \$1 million each month in Oklahoma City stores.

The food stamp program has operated in Oklahoma City since November 1972. It is administered in Oklahoma in cooperation with FNS by the State's Institution, Social and Rehabilitative Services Administration.

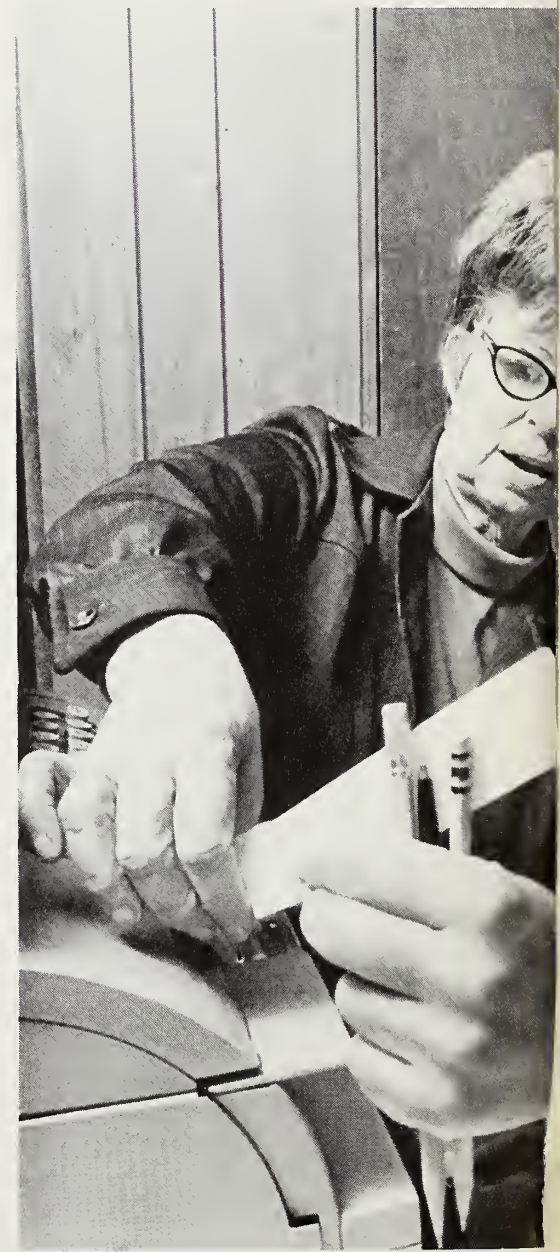
ACVTE director Bill Phillips began the mobile cashier-checker course in 1969 when he realized that students in some parts of the city were having difficulty making it to classes at the center. The program includes students from all parts of metropolitan Oklahoma City, which is a 5,024 square mile area.

Mr. Phillips tested the mobile unit, teaching the first few courses himself. And the response was so good, the program became a permanent part of the curriculum. In addition to the Oklahoma City van, ACVTE operates a van that travels statewide and another that covers the Tulsa area.

"Grocery store owners have been very receptive to the program and most generous in letting us use their parking lots," explains Doris Brannon, who has taught the Oklahoma City course since 1971. Ms. Brannon spent many years as a grocery store owner



Lonnie Johnson meets with ACVTE director Bill Phillips.



Ms. Brannon shows two trainees how to work.

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Lonnie Johnson meets with ACVTE director Bill Phillips and teacher Doris Brannon at a training site.



Ms. Brannon shows two trainees how to work one of several operating cash registers in the mobile van.

and manager, and her students get the full advantage of her experience.

In addition to teaching duties, Ms. Brannon also contacts grocers to discuss placement of graduates and determine which areas of town are in need of checkers.

About 70 percent of Ms. Brannon's students qualify for the supermarket work, while the others are able to work in smaller groceries and other retail outlets.

"I am able to place every graduate capable of supermarket work," says Ms. Brannon.

"Most stores just won't hire people as checkers unless they have the training," she adds. "And I won't recommend people unless they're qualified."

To qualify for supermarket work, the student must check 30 items, including five "splits," and figure tax mentally in 90 seconds. A split is an item priced as a group but purchased singularly. For example, a customer buys two cans of green beans that are priced three for \$1.

Most of the students' time is spent in the van's miniature store, which is completely equipped with shelves of priced groceries and four check-out stands. They spend most of their time working on practical problems, but the course also includes theory taught in a classroom and visits from outside specialists.

Lonnie Johnson, officer-in-charge of the Oklahoma City FNS field office, is a guest lecturer at each class discussion of the food stamp program. He provides FNS fact sheets and publications for each student and keeps Ms. Brannon informed of program changes.

"I include the program's history and background in my discussion of food stamps," Johnson explains. "This gives the student a better idea why the program exists, as well as what the rules are."

And, according to one recent graduate, Johnson's training certainly pays off. "We have to help the new food stamp customers learn to shop with food stamps," says Lynda Taylor, now a checker at an Oklahoma City grocery store. "At first, they are not sure what they can buy with stamps."

USDA regulations for the food

stamp program specify that participants can use stamps to buy only food for human consumption. They cannot use stamps to buy liquor, beer, cigarettes, soap, paper products, or other nonfood items.

So checkers must know more than how to just handle the stamps.

But in a recent class, a student pointed out another way a checker can help the food stamp customer. "We are in a position to correct the misunderstandings other people have about the program. We shouldn't do or say anything to embarrass the food stamp customer."

The 80-hour cashier-checker course is open to anyone who is at least 16 years old and has basic math skills. The course is funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Federal Disadvantaged Funds, and tuition is free. Course materials are \$11.

Another cashier-checker course in Oklahoma City is offered by Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc. The course, offered free to low-income people, starts off with instruction in the basic skills, particularly math and reading, and then moves on to cashier-checker training.

During the 5½ week course, students are tested in a variety of food stamp situations at the cash register and on paper. Students use token groceries and "play" food stamps to make change.

Lonnie Johnson also works with Eunice Streeter, the course teacher, keeping her aware of any changes in the food stamp program.

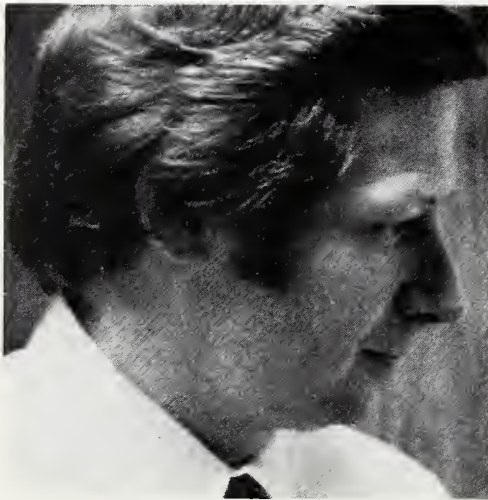
"Food stamps are a big part of the grocery business today," says Ms. Streeter, "so these students need to know all about the program."

Ms. Streeter's students must pass a qualifying test similar to the one required of ACVTE trainees. And so far the qualified Opportunities Industrial Center graduates have had no trouble finding jobs.

Future grocery checkers in Oklahoma City, whether attending class in a mobile van or in a regular classroom, are learning all about the food stamp program. And the results are already showing up in the stores, where managers report fewer mistakes in food stamp handling. ☆

Walter Colender: Profile of a State School Lunch Director

By Joe Dunphy



A motorcycle glides into the parking lot at the State Department of Education Building in Trenton, New Jersey. The rider easily maneuvers to a small space right near the entrance to the building.

And the workday begins for Walter Colender, director of the Bureau of Food Programs.

From his offices in the two-story, converted furniture store, Mr. Colender directs a staff of 18 professionals responsible for administering lunch programs in 2,450 schools with some 450,000 youngsters.

"I am blessed with a staff possessing a wide range of personalities and divergent viewpoints," said the 36-year-old Trenton native. "But they're generally unified and moving in the same direction whenever school kids and their feeding are involved."

The staff includes a nutrition coordinator and field consultants, educational planners, equipment specialists and clerical support.

"They make my job look easy," Mr. Colender said.

But his staff is well aware of the director's leadership role, as he involves himself in all aspects of the program from menu planning to equipment design, financing and outreach.

Mr. Colender considers accountability of funds the major responsibility of the State agency operation. In New Jersey, some \$45 million in State and Federal funds were spent last year in child nutrition programs.

The Bureau of Food Programs has to make sure that funds are accurately disbursed to participating schools, on the basis of their claims, the director explained.

"I believe we are doing a thorough job in this area," he said.

With the passage of the State's School Lunch Act last July, outreach also became a top priority item on Mr. Colender's list of daily activities.

The legislation mandated that a school lunch program be provided in schools in which 5 percent of the pupils enrolled meet the eligibility requirements for a free or reduced-price lunch.

Mr. Colender and his staff have been tirelessly assisting some 300 schools toward implementing the lunch program as required by law. In October, the agency held a statewide conference of no-program schools that involved 125 school districts. The State director used this session to gather information on equipment and space needs of the schools represented.

"It may take a longer period of time to swing all schools in this category into some form of lunch program," he explained, "but I feel that once this large group enters, it will tend to sweep a large majority of the others along with them."

Mr. Colender said his staff works out the details involved in assessing school needs since his training is not in food service. His training includes degrees in health and education, both earned at Pennsylvania State University.

But in his 3 years as State director, he has taken a number of courses in food services management in order to "stay on top of things" in the industry and to find ways to improve the State's program.

Mr. Colender suggested that one way to get new schools into the program might be to "break down" school district lines in order to better serve schools in adjacent districts that need child feeding programs but do not have facilities or money to build them.

Another of the director's concerns is food waste in school cafeterias.

"This is possibly a national disgrace and not just confined to New Jersey," he said.

Solutions to the problem of waste are not easy, Mr. Colender admitted, but he felt that schools could play an important part in setting an example for conservation.

"Perhaps, school food service personnel should take a long and studied look into their garbage cans to find out what the kids don't want to eat," he said.

And he noted that the lunch program should be structured to meet the needs of students.

"We need to educate our food service personnel as to what kids want to eat," he said. "This is particularly important at the high school level."

Some schools in New Jersey, Mr. Colender explained, have formed student advisory committees that meet with cafeteria supervisors to discuss menu ideas and student preferences.

The committees provide a chance for students to offer suggestions and for food service personnel to explain what they can and cannot do.

This kind of communication can often improve the lunch program and cut down on waste, the State school lunch director pointed out.

Mr. Colender's desire to operate his program efficiently and economically would seem to stem from his personal life, judging from his mode of transportation to work—his gas-saving motorbike.

Right?

"Well, actually I'm a motorcycle cornball," he explained. "And I can get a better parking spot at the office than my boss." ☆

TYPE A DIET PLATES TRIM POUNDS

This is the second of a two-part series on increasing high school participation in Canyon del Oro, Arizona

By Benedicto Montoya

There are meat diets and no meat diets, liquid diets and starvation diets. To lose weight you can have your jaws wired together, take some newly discovered diet pill, or, as students at Canyon del Oro High School are being urged to do, eat a special Type A lunch.

It's called a diet plate by Lois Searer, school food service director of the Amphitheater School District in Tucson, Arizona. But to students—dieters and non-dieters—it is an attractive addition to the National School Lunch Program that's shaped to fit their needs and desires.

Since the Type A diet plate program began, participation has ranged from 50 to 90 students a day. For the most part, Ms. Searer says kids with weight problems are buying the lunch. However, the growing clientele includes school athletes, especially the wrestling team whose members need to maintain a specific weight for the sport.

"The school's coaches," says the food service director, "are promoting not only our diet plate but our regular lunch as well."

For some, dieting is a necessary evil, but as Ms. Searer points out, it doesn't have to be an ordeal. She believes the secret to dieting is three sensibly balanced meals a day which include items from all four food groups necessary for good health.

A parent looking at one of Ms. Searer's Type A diet plates might question its dieting value. "It surprises some people to see bread on the plate," she says. "What they don't realize is that the bread and cereal food group is necessary to make the body function. This is especially true for growing, active teenagers. And, of course, if we are going to serve a diet plate in the

schools, it must be a Type A diet plate, and that means bread."

Elsie Morrison, cafeteria manager at Canyon del Oro, runs a 1-week menu cycle for her diet plate program which she plans to increase to a 2-week cycle. She begins with tuna salad, green beans, a tomato slice, bread and butter, fruit and milk. Then she substitutes such entrees as: cottage cheese, beef patties, surf patties made of tuna, and the most popular plate, a taco salad. All the lunches, Ms. Morrison explains, include four ounces of protein and offer a choice of whole or skim milk.

Ms. Searer is pleased with the students' acceptance of the diet meals. The food service director says the students are realizing that a complete nutritious lunch can still be low in calories. "Slowly but surely we are educating these kids to proper nutritional needs," she explains.

Nutrition education is not a job that falls solely on the shoulders of Ms. Searer and her staff. Rick Wilson, Canyon del Oro High School principal, is currently organizing a class tentatively called "weight awareness," which will focus on the body's nutritional needs and what it takes to maintain a good weight. Mr. Wilson plans to address the class on a weekly basis and invite cafeteria manager Ms. Morrison to speak on the role the cafeteria and school lunch program play in overall nutrition.

Ms. Searer feels that once the entire program is operating—school lunch plus nutrition education—students will relate differently to the cafeteria. "If we can get them to realize that good nutrition is necessary for their well being, our efforts will have been successful."

Ms. Searer is pleased with the cooperation she is receiving throughout

her district, and credits Mr. Wilson with the "push" that began the diet plate program. "We told him we were thinking about offering a diet plate lunch and he pushed us into starting," she says. "We weren't quite ready to begin but we did anyway."

Ms. Searer explains that her diet luncheon was not a new idea but grew out of a service Ms. Morrison was providing to students with weight problems. Before the program began, 5 to 10 students a day were placing orders with Ms. Morrison for diet plates.

"They would come in," Ms. Searer says, "and explain that they were on a diet. We provided a diet plate which they would eat in the cafeteria. Other students would see it and ask where they got it.

"We started getting so many orders for diet plates we decided to make them a part of our regular program," she explains. "It was real good advance publicity."

Ms. Searer says that the teenagers are not hesitant about going through the special line to pick up a diet plate. "I suspect that many of the kids eating it don't have a weight problem at all. We don't discourage them. It's a good meal."

Ms. Searer sees her job as more than just getting students to relate positively to the cafeteria staff's efforts. Next year she plans to explain the school lunch program to school staff and parents.

"Even though this is strictly a student oriented program," the food service director says, "we have found it helpful to educate the faculty and parents to what this program is all about. In talking with faculty members," she says, "many were surprised, for example, that we received USDA reimbursement."

From September through December 1974, daily participation in the National School Lunch Program increased by 500 students. Ms. Searer and her staff are serving Type A lunches to 50 percent of the district's students. She credits this success to the cooperation she has received from faculty and school staff, who in turn credit Ms. Searer and her staff with innovation in meeting the needs and desires of her customers. ☆

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
Division of Public Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402

Official Business.

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FOOD AND NUTRITION is published bimonthly by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The use of funds for printing this publication has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through November 30, 1976. Yearly subscription is \$2.50 domestic, \$3.15 foreign. Single copies 45 cents each. Subscription orders should be sent to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 20402.

Reference to commercial products and services does not imply endorsement or discrimination by the Department of Agriculture.

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this Department.

Prints of photos may be obtained from Photo Library, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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NOTE: FOOD AND NUTRITION regrets the error on the cover of the February issue. The caption should read: Alexander Hamilton Appears on the New \$10.00 Food Stamp.

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